COMMON Ground

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the future of modern

federal architecture in an era of change

Marcel Breuer's HUD Building, a picture of design excellence in the 1960s

FIRST WORD

Spontaneous Excellence

BY PAUL DOLINSKY

"THAT'S A BOUCHER" IS A PHRASE often heard among architects, photographers, and historians perusing the vast collection of photography in the National Park Service archive of American architecture, the Historic American Buildings Survey. Well over 300 photographers have contributed images to the collection, but none is more recognizable than a Jack Boucher photograph. His name is synonymous with HABS, not just because of the sheer volume of his contribution over the past 50 years, but because of the quality and signature of his work. **WHAT ARE THE HALLMARKS OF A** Boucher photograph? His recent retirement—and the salute to his work on page 12 of this issue—offer an opportunity to reflect. He often says that his early training as a news photographer, in the 1950s, gave him a rigor that served him well throughout his career. Spontaneity was everything. Working for the *Atlantic City Tribune,* he didn't have the luxury of time to produce the perfect image. He had to quickly capture the subject and hope his technical skills produced what he was after. Some of his most iconic images, like his picture of the massive, mist-shrouded columns of the Carson House, an extravagant Victorian landmark in Eureka, California, capture the immediacy of his newspaper days. The look that morning was just right and the opportunity could not be lost. The sense of the moment marks it as a Boucher photo. **WHEN HE HAD THE LUXURY OF TIME,** he worked that sensibility into the image as well. His shot of Lorton, Virginia's Gunston Hall reveals the way raking light can illustrate architectural detail. This carefully produced image is the result of selecting the exact moment of the exact day when the light would produce the perfect picture, another Boucher hallmark. **HIS TECHNICAL SKILL,** combined with an uncanny eye for recognizing a building's significant features, made Jack Boucher a vital asset to the HABS program. Image manipulation was not necessary to his art. The art was in the field, not in the lab. **IMAGES IN THE HABS COLLECTION** must accurately document the subject for the record. That is the baseline requirement. Jack always produced the required elevation and detail images. But his work was highly pictorial, too, elevating it beyond architectural documentation. It is common to see the gracefully arching tree branch enveloping a steeple, or a tightly framed entrance walkway, the subtle departures from form that underpin his style. That all this was done with a cumbersome, large-format camera, with hundreds of pounds of accessories and lighting equipment, must not be overlooked. "It weighs 50 pounds," he often said, "but that's at 8 a.m." He carried that burden to 49 states, making more than 50,000 images documenting the history of the United States, published and exhibited as fine art for five decades. **"PAINTING WITH LIGHT"** is how Jack refers to the artful illumination of subject matter. Most times that meant knowing the vicissitudes of the sun, the seasons, and the time of day. Other times it meant painting his own light on the canvas. Boucher's shot of the coal stove at the Bradford Meeting House was illuminated with thousands of watts of carefully staged, though invisible, lights. His view of Fort Pulaski was similarly choreographed, the illumination tucked out of sight behind each arch in a series down a corridor, all commanded with a shutter click. The result looks completely natural. **PERHAPS IN SOME SMALL WAY THIS HELPS** explain why Jack was the recipient of the Meritorious Service Award, the second highest honor bestowed by the U.S. Department of the Interior. With characteristic humility, he says, "Although I have some favorites, I have yet to make my best photograph." His favorites always seem to involve the spontaneous and serendipitous, due probably to an instinct from his newspaper days. There is perhaps no better example of the Boucher touch than when he was setting up to shoot through the front door of New Mexico's San Jose de Gracia Church, trying to capture the contrast of desert light outside with somber light within. In the moment before he clicked the shutter, an elderly nun peeked around the doorjamb. It's a Boucher classic.

"His technical skill, combined with an uncanny eye for recognizing a building's significant features, made Jack Boucher a vital asset to the HABS program. Image manipulation was not necessary to his art. The art was in the field, not in the lab."

Paul D. Dolinsky is Chief of the Historic American Landscapes Survey and former Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey.

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BEN SCHNALL/COURTESY OF THE MARCEL BREUER PAPERS, 1920-1986, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

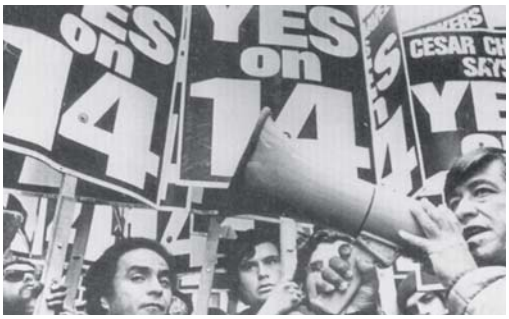
Back: **Office of the Shaker Centre Family Trustees, a Kentucky religious community active from 1805 to 1910, now a national historic landmark. Photographer Jack Boucher was poised over the center of the stairwell with his 52-pound camera, kept from falling by one assistant holding a rope tied to his ladder and another assistant holding a rope tied to him.**
JACK E. BOUCHER/NPS/HABS

NEWS CLOSEUP

AGENT OF CHANGE

Honoring the Center of the American Farm Worker Movement

The rural California compound that served as the center of the American farm worker movement—synonymous with legendary labor organizer César Chávez—has come to symbolize the struggle for reform in the agricultural industry during the 1960s, a struggle undertaken by marginalized migrant workers against great odds. The just-designated national historic landmark—four brick and stucco structures known as Forty Acres—was the headquarters for Chávez, who emerged as the charismatic leader of the movement, the son of agricultural laborers who lost their land in the Great Depression, and an admirer of Mahatma Gandhi who similarly used the approach of agitation and nonviolence to great effect.



OPPOSITE LEFT TO RIGHT OSCAR CASTILLO, ASSOCIATED PRESS, JON LEWIS, RIGHT GEORGE BALLIS/TAKE STOCK

IN THE 1960S, THE RIGHTS OF FARM WORKERS LAGGED FAR BEHIND THOSE OF LABORERS IN OTHER TRADES. THE NATIONAL Labor Relations Act of 1935, which established workers' rights to organize and engage in collective bargaining, excluded agricultural workers. Powerful agribusinesses used intimidation to discourage organizing. Against this backdrop, California's rich central valley—with its largely poor farm workers, many Chicano and Filipino—became the scene of sweeping change, where Chávez emerged as an icon.

He was a community organizer in the 1950s, traveling throughout California with a Latino group that advocated for workers' rights. By the 1960s, he was deeply involved in the increasingly vocal farm workers' movement, co-founding what became the United Farm Workers. In 1965, Filipino American laborers struck against California grape growers, demanding better wages. Chavez and the UFW joined them, organizing an historic march from Delano, where Forty Acres is located, to the state capitol in Sacramento.

IN 1966, WITH ATTENTION GROWING ON THE PLIGHT OF THE FARM WORKERS, THE UFW PURCHASED FORTY ACRES FOR $2,700. The workers built the structures with the help of volunteers and other sympathetic unions. An administration center went up, followed by a service station, a health clinic, a hiring hall, and lodging for retired Filipino farm workers. Except for the administration building, the structures are in the Mission Revival style. Forty Acres was not just the headquarters of a national union; it was also built to meet the needs of the Filipino and Chicano community. The complex included a barbecue pit, a well with a pump, landscaping, a recreation area, and a grazing pasture. Farm laborers flocked to Forty Acres for health care and for information on their rights.

The grape strike became an epic five-year struggle, with the UFW convincing Americans to boycott the product. Chávez fasted in protest, holding out at Forty Acres' small service station, drawing media attention to the cause. As a Senate subcommittee looked into the matter, Senator Robert F. Kennedy went to California, returning in full support. He went on to become a Chávez admirer and ally.

IN 1970, THE GRAPE GROWERS FINALLY came to terms, signing the first contracts in U.S. history negotiated by farm workers, who also began mobilizing in Texas, Ohio, and Wisconsin, where similar unions formed. The activism of Chávez and the UFW led to the first labor law for farm workers: 1975's California Agricultural Labor Relations Act.

Forty Acres holds additional significance because it is "part of a wider range of reform movements that helped define twentieth-century American history," says the landmark designation.

To view the designation, go to www.nps.gov/history/nhl/designations/samples/CA/FortyAcres.pdf. The United Farm Workers web site has a wealth of historical information; go to www.ufw.org.

Above left to right: The Brown Berets, young Latinos who served as César Chávez' security detail in the early 1970s; Chávez leading a San Francisco rally in in 1976; Forty Acres, United Farm Workers headquarters. Right: Chávez in the 1960s.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Bungalow Heaven

Pasadena Arts and Crafts Enclave Joins National Register of Historic Places

A LARGE SECTION OF A PASADENA NEIGHBORHOOD, RARE FOR ITS ARCHITECTURAL integrity, recently joined the National Register of Historic Places. Bungalow Heaven, as the place is called, is a 16-block area rich with Arts and Crafts-style houses largely unaltered since their construction in the early 20th century. One of the largest intact concentrations of this type of housing in America, it is a veritable museum of the Arts and Crafts period.

The city has earned national renown for its tree-lined streets populated by classic California bungalows, a scene that transports visitors to another time. The low-slung roofs, spacious porches, decorative rafter tails, and simple rustic touches account for just a small part of a powerful sense of character.

The Arts and Crafts movement itself reflected the cultural changes of the time. In its spare and simple lines, its emphasis on natural materials and surfaces that appear to be hand-finished, the architecture is a repudiation of what was seen as Victorian excess. On a deeper level, the design was part of a larger reaction against industrialization, mass production, and the urban environment. Houses simple yet refined, with details that had the look of handcraft, were intended as a return to a more virtuous, less complicated time.

A RETURN TO NATURE WAS ALSO A PART OF IT, WITH A VIEW OF THE OUTDOORS a source of inspiration and renewal. "Simplicity" and "honesty" are words sometimes used to describe the Arts and Crafts aesthetic,

Right: Homes in Pasadena's Bungalow Heaven neighborhood, a recent addition to the National Register of Historic Places, displaying the bungalow's chameleon-like ability to absorb local styles and building materials. Left: A meticulously kept classic.

ALL PHOTOS DOUGLAS KEISTER

AS AN ARTIFACT OF PASADENA'S HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT, BUNGALOW Heaven reflects not only the growth of a large working class in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but also how architectural style expresses the sentiments of its time. Pasadena at the turn of the century was transforming from an agricultural community to a largely residential one, with former citrus groves subdivided for housing lots. There was plenty of land and no need to construct tall buildings. All the houses in the district are either one or one-and-a-half story. According to the National Register nomination, "The neighborhood reflects the democratic ethic of the early 20th century where every workingman could own a home that espoused the themes of a pleasant, close-to-nature, modern place to live."

and these concepts are very much at work here. It could be said that architectural form was a state of mind, the design intended to create an environment that stimulated artistic and intellectual growth. The houses feature river rock in foundations and hearths, a wealth of natural wood in interior finishes, exposed framing, and low, horizontal lines and massing in order to blend with their natural surroundings. In Pasadena, a signature California bungalow developed, incorporating redwood shingles and elements from the region's Spanish and Asian heritage.

Pasadena began as a small hamlet in the early 1870s, with settlers from Indiana producing oranges, olives, and grapes in abundance, accumulating a fair amount of wealth. Throughout the 1880s, it continued to grow, developing a vital commercial center and a section

called "Millionaire's Row." With its mild climate and beautiful surroundings, Pasadena was discovered by the tourist industry, fueled by a national craze for the outdoors and a belief in nature's restorative powers. In time, the city gained a reputation as a retreat for the wealthy. A thriving upper class meant jobs lower down the ladder in construction, agriculture, retail, and service occupations. This and a developing transportation system spurred growth. The first houses in the district were built in the 1880s, some of which still stand. The most striking characteristic, however, is the number of bungalows built from 1905 to 1920—of the 500 structures significant to the National Register listing, most are in the Arts and Crafts style.

Other styles contribute to the significance, too, like Queen Anne vernacular houses, built in the 1880s—one-story wood frame structures with narrow windows and large front porches with decorative columns, brackets, and balustrades. The 1890s brought massed-plan vernacular houses to Pasadena, a "mostly unadorned" early form of the bungalow, says the National Register nomination. The Arts and Crafts period itself saw various styles, and combinations of styles.

Far left: The spread-out proportions give a relaxed look in the late afternoon sun. Near left: Evidencing the style's adaptability, this bungalow alludes to California's Spanish colonial heritage. Right: Interior of a 1911 bungalow, decorated with period furniture.

WHILE THE HOUSES OF THE WEALTHY WERE DESIGNED BY ARCHITECTS—SUCH AS Charles and Henry Greene, whose 1908 Gamble House is a national historic landmark—the houses of Bungalow Heaven were constructed by local builders or made from pattern books. The one-story was suited to the climate. The deep overhangs of the eaves shade the interior, the large verandas encourage time outdoors, and plentiful windows provide ventilation. They were modest and affordable. Built-in cabinetry, a hallmark of the Arts and Crafts home, saved space.

In a paradox to some of the lofty ideas behind the style, bungalows were mass produced as ready-to-build kits. Sears Roebuck sold them, as did Montgomery Ward. The Ready-Cut Bungalow Company of Los Angeles did well during the period, selling kits for about $650, delivered to vacant lots. Plumbing fixtures were extra.

The Craftsman bungalow was a bit of a chameleon. An important element was its adaptability, and wherever bungalows went up, builders used local materials and adopted local character, proclaiming neighborhood identity whether in Pittsburgh, Memphis, Houston, or any place near a railroad siding where the pre-cut kits could be unloaded.

THE ROAD TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER STARTED IN THE 1980S, WHEN DEVELOPERS began tearing down houses to build apartment complexes. A particular challenge was homeowners who, as described by the neighborhood association, wanted to "bulldoze and cash in." Residents mobilized, petitioning the city council for a zoning ordinance to prevent high-density development. There were many neighborhood meetings, hearings, petitions, and phone campaigns. The result was a perception of the place as something really out of the ordinary, with "Bungalow Heaven" an apt description of what residents were trying to preserve. The city agreed to downzone the area, effectively ending the threat. But there were other issues to tackle. Preservationists realized that historic character could be destroyed a little at a time by aluminum siding, enclosed porches, and inappropriate additions.

A long campaign made Bungalow Heaven a city historic landmark—which complements the National Register honor—with the Pasadena preservation department now working closely with the neighborhood. Under local ordinances, any work that will alter a house's character requires approval from the city's cultural heritage commission. The neighborhood surveyed the most significant homes, providing guidance on CD to educate would-be remodelers.

For more information visit the Bungalow Heaven Neighborhood Association's web site at http://www.bungalowheaven.org/. For more on the National Register of Historic Places, see http://www.nps.gov/nr/.

GRANT SPOTLIGHT

GLIMPSE OF HISTORY

Preserving the Texture of Time at the Eastman House Museum

For many years, a remarkable portrait of 19th century America has been preserved at the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, the world's oldest photography museum. And it is—literally—a portrait: a collection of some 3,500 daguerreotypes whose lighting and focus are so crisp, a viewer can almost feel the texture of the subjects' clothes. Among them are 1,200 images taken by Albert Southworth and Josiah Hawes, considered to be two of the finest American portraitists of their century. Now, a $250,000 grant from the NPS-administered Save America's Treasures program, to be matched by other sources, will help stabilize these "aesthetically unparalleled" images—in the words of the award documentation—while improving storage and enhancing access.

WHEN NEWS OF FRENCH CHEMIST LOUIS DAGUERRE'S INNOVATION REACHED America in 1839, a host of imitators sprang up. Southworth and Hawes' Boston studio advertised "the perfect daguerreotype," targeting the rich and influential. Their clientele included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Louisa May Alcott, and Daniel Webster.

Above: A sampling from the Eastman House daguerreotype collection, which provides an unparalleled glimpse into the mid-19th century. Right: An unidentified woman at Southworth and Hawes' Boston studio in 1852. The pair mastered daguerreotype technology, elevating it to an art form.

The pair teased out the most compelling qualities of the process, using 8 x 6-inch plates, which, though difficult to work with because of their large size, yielded superior quality. And they did not farm out work, as many studios did. They took all their own images, which in technique, composition, and feeling transcended the form of the commercial portrait, becoming art.

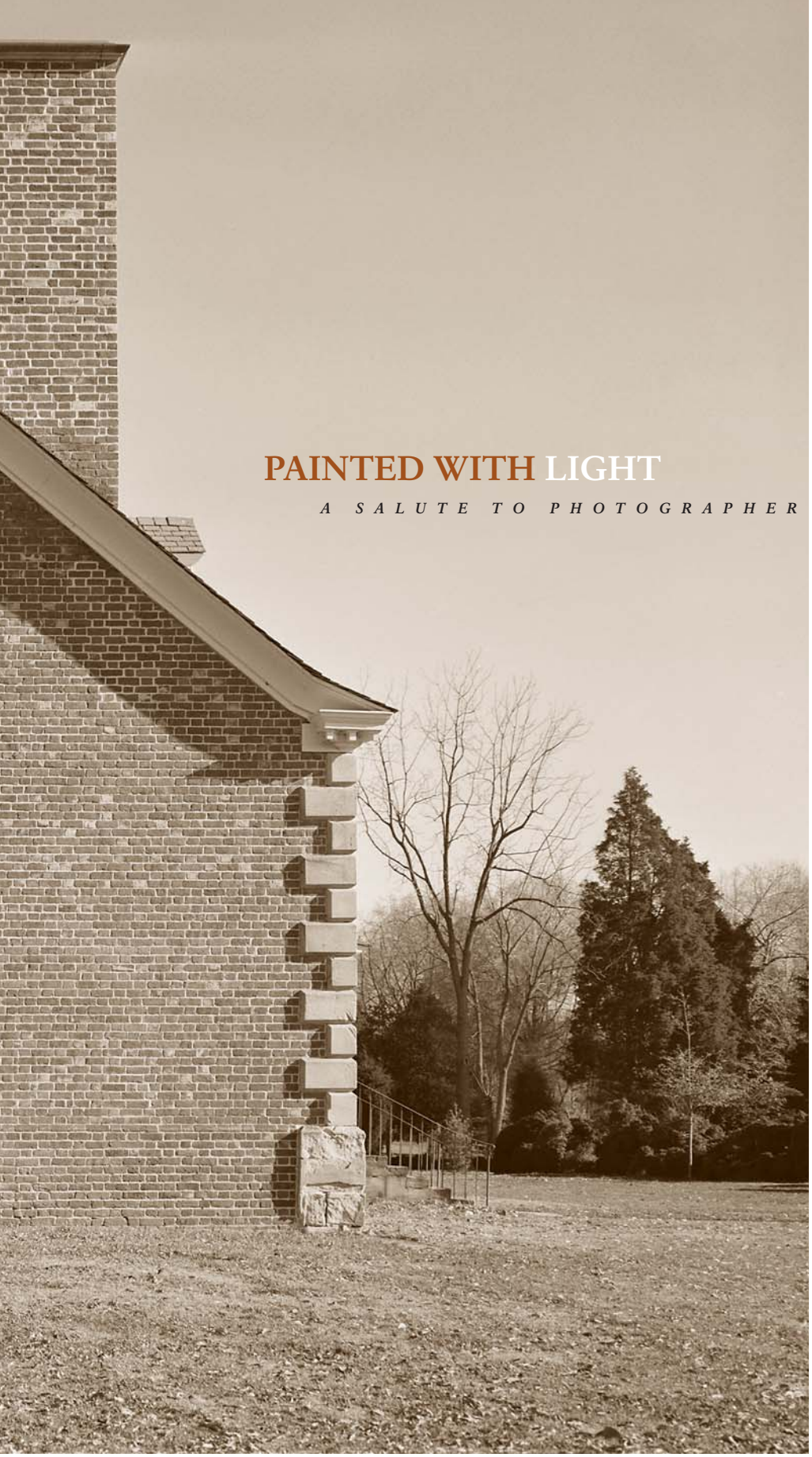
There is a reticence, a grimness even, in the faces of the subjects, perhaps reflecting the mores and hardships of the time. Occasionally, a light expression seems about to emerge, making one wonder if a subject was as intriguing in person as he or she is in a gallery of faces.

Southworth and Hawes, in business from 1843 to 1863, captured more than individual portraits. As their reputation grew, they became the photographers of choice for the major figures of the time, producing a picture of the era. According to the exhibit text, "Their studio attracted icons of the great American political, economic, and cultural movements and events of the 1840s and 1850s: transcendentalism, European revolutions, American nativism, the China Trade, the annexation of Texas, the Mexican War, and the Gold Rush." What a viewer sees today is nothing less than a glimpse of the human face of history.

THERE ARE OTHER COLLECTIONS OF SOUTHWORTH AND HAWES IMAGES, BUT the largest is at the Eastman House, which in 2005 partnered with the International Center of Photography in the traveling exhibition "Young America: The Daguerreotypes of Southworth & Hawes," which also featured images from numerous other collections (the exhibit is still online at www.eastmanhouse.org/icp/pages/young_america.html). The George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film, located in the Colonial Revival mansion where the Eastman Kodak founder lived from 1905 to 1932, opened as a photography and film museum in 1949. Aside from housing one of the world's oldest film archives, it is a national historic landmark due to its association with Eastman, considered the father of modern photography. The institution is an international leader in conserving film and photographs, offering instruction to curators and archivists from around the world.

Visit the George Eastman House at www.eastmanhouse.org. For more information on Save America's Treasures, go to www.nps.gov/history/hps/treasures or contact the National Park Service Historic Preservation Grants Division at (202) 354-2020, ext. 1.

ALL PHOTOS GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE, INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILM



PAINTED WITH LIGHT

A SALUTE TO PHOTOGRAPHER JACK BOUCHER

by joe flanagan

IT IS A MONOCHROMATIC WORLD OF GABLE ROOFS, PORTICOS, door knockers, and balustrades; of stairways, barn board, and cedar shingles; of the dense ornament of the early high-rise and the Spartan parlor of a frontier president. And for all the grandeur, for all the quaintness, there is something lonely, something somber and elegiac. You can't escape the sensation that something is going on that does not lend itself to language. The pictures are alive with the intangible thing that is history. That is largely due to the man who took them. Jack Boucher of the NPS Historic American Buildings Survey just ended a 50-year career as the agency's much acclaimed photographer of historic sites. His work not only helped set the standard for architectural documentation, but is widely admired for its artistry. Boucher's images trace the arc of the preservation movement; its concerns, in any given decade, apparent in his lens. Colonial, vernacular, Victorian, industrial—he captured places invaluable to the American narrative. Through thousands of photographs, innumerable miles on the road, and untold hours chasing the light, Boucher produced a body of work that is nothing less than a portrait of American history. His career was intertwined with the growth of HABS, the nation's oldest federal preservation program, singular in terms of its scope and the accessibility of what it has produced—a wealth of histories accompanied by images like Boucher's, online and on the shelves at the Library of Congress. As the survey examined our past, Jack Boucher served as its eyes.

LEFT: *Gunston Hall, home of George Mason, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Says veteran Historic American Buildings Survey photographer Jack Boucher, "This is why we use a view camera. You could put a glass on this picture and count all the bricks."*

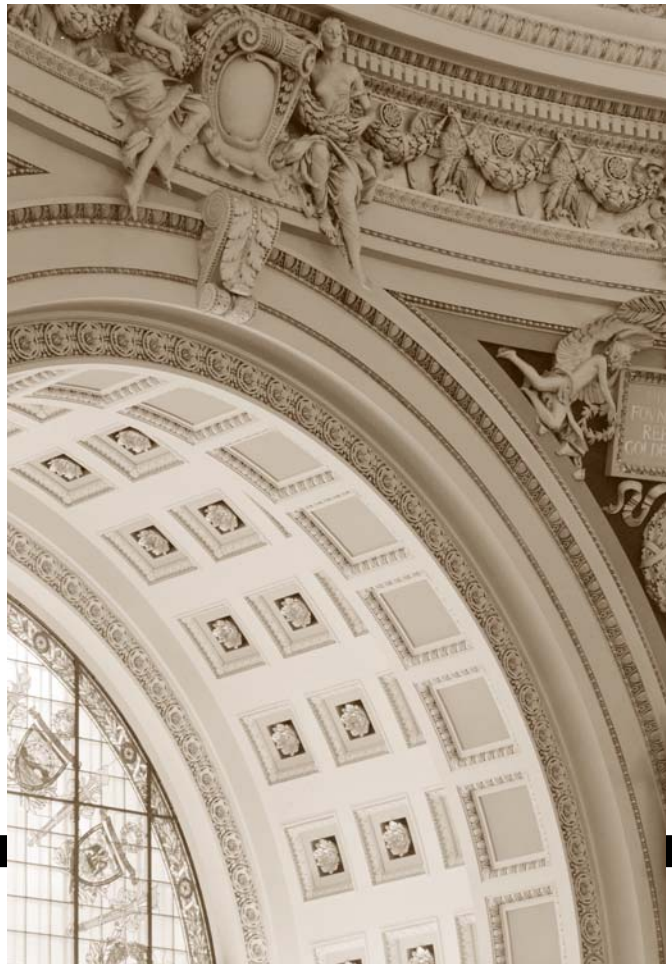
ALL PHOTOS JACK E. BOUCHER/NPS/HABS

BOUCHER, THE SON OF A NEW JERSEY NEWSPAPERMAN, JOINED THE NATIONAL Park Service in 1958, having refined his skills as an Atlantic City news photographer and as the official lensman for the construction of the Garden State Parkway. He arrived at a time when postwar prosperity had elevated newness to exalted heights. Space was the new frontier and hardly anyone was looking back along the superhighways then spreading across America.

The National Park Service was preparing for its 50th anniversary—coming up in 1966—with a major initiative to fix aging facilities and construct visitors centers to accommodate the newly mobile car culture. Mission 66, as it was known, brought an influx of investment into the parks. The agency began in earnest to care for a new class of property—historic sites—places increasingly the focus of scholarly study needing the expertise that HABS could bring to bear.

The survey, begun in 1933 as a New Deal project to employ out-of-work architects, became a joint initiative of the National Park Service, the American Institute of Architects, and the Library of Congress. Its goal was a nationwide inventory of historic buildings, documented with measured drawings, large-format photography, and research reports. World War II and the Korean War interrupted the effort, and by the time it resumed in the mid-'50s, large sections of cities were being demolished in the name of urban renewal.

Into this scene stepped Jack Boucher, to serve part-time with HABS and part-time with the National Park Service Branch of Stills and Motion Pictures, a public relations organ touting Mission 66.



Boucher's images trace

the arc of the preservation movement; its concerns, in any given decade, apparent in his lens. Colonial, vernacular, Victorian, industrial—he captured places invaluable to the American narrative.

RIGHT: *"An extravagant example of woodwork and design," Boucher says of the Carson House in Eureka, California, built in 1885 by a timber mogul. The Queen Anne Victorian structure is one of the nation's most famous. Boucher happened to be there on a misty morning in 1960. "One thing the California coast has," he says, "is fogginess. That couldn't have worked out better because it gave an ethereal quality—there was no background to distract the viewer. My best pictures were taken under those circumstances. A lot of luck."* **LEFT:** *Ornate portico and frieze at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. "Things like this are difficult," Boucher says, "because you need ladders and other stunts. Lighting is a problem." The photographer's bulky 5x7 large format camera, which requires a tripod, made for a challenge too.*

Boucher says his job was, in part, "to take pictures of people enjoying the parks." He headed out in his own car on a six-month tour of the West, towing a trailer that served as a darkroom, fitted with developing sinks cut into modified card tables.

Flush with resources and a new sense of mission, HABS teams recorded a host of National Park Service historic sites: Independence Hall, Harpers Ferry, the John Quincy Adams House, and others. Boucher's knowledge of historic architecture—he'd been active in the New Jersey preservation scene—proved an asset. So did his experience with large-format photography, the standard for architectural documentation. HABS' Depression-era work tended to focus on pre-Civil War structures, especially those of colonial times. Now, in the wake of urban renewal, the definition of "historic" grew more encompassing. Mission 66 gave HABS a freer rein, with the survey eventually taking in the landmarks of the modern movement that helped spawn the postwar transformation.

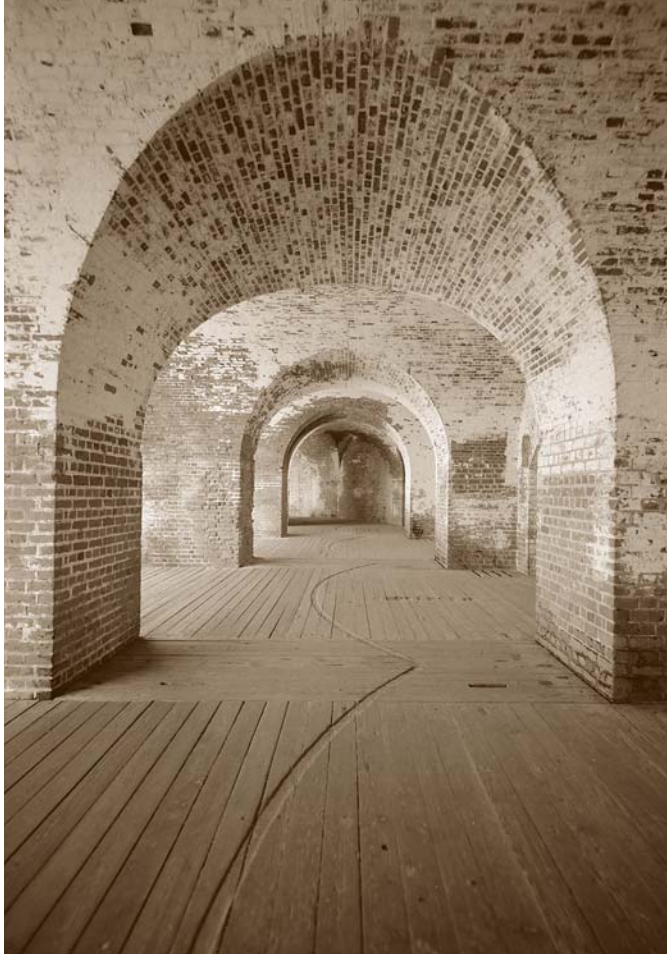
This was the environment in which Boucher honed his craft. A reinvigorated HABS reinstituted one of the approaches of its early days: the regional survey. Depression-era teams had recorded Native American pueblos and Spanish missions in the Southwest, neoclassical mansions in the South, and a host of other regional building forms. Picking up that strategy again in the late '50s, HABS teams traveled to Vermont to document 18th and 19th century buildings, surveyed old New England textile mills, and recorded the imperiled early high-rise architecture of Chicago, where the loss was so alarming that the city became a key battleground in the fight for preservation.

There were stirrings in Washington that would culminate in the landmark National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, but the road there would be littered with the rubble of history. According to a soon-to-be-published history of the survey, "The rapid pace of redevelopment created a moment of awareness [that went] from the local areas affected to the upper echelons of government." Increasingly, HABS was called on to record structures facing the wrecking ball. A federally appointed committee, whose report—illustrated in part with Jack's work—led to the Act, likened the growing HABS documentation to a roll call of the lost, calling the survey one of the bright spots in an otherwise bleak landscape.

Toting his bulky equipment, this was the landscape that Boucher traveled. His camera, though intended solely for documentation, became a tool to evoke the aura of the past. He relied mostly on the 5x7 format, to capture detail, produce high quality enlargements, and correct the perspective distortion inherent in photographing large or tall structures. It was also conducive to showing a structure in context—often a building in relation to its landscape—a Boucher forté.

LEFT: *The Gropius House, built outside Boston in 1937 by architect Walter Gropius, founder of Germany's Bauhaus school of design. "HABS covers everything from privies to palaces," Boucher says. "Somewhere in the middle is modern architecture." He adds, "Any time you do a house that has a unique owner, especially one that was an architect, you're really conscientious . . . you could feel Walter's spirit in the building."* **BELOW:** *The Johnson Wax Building in Racine, Wisconsin, Frank Lloyd Wright's 1939 design. Like the Gropius House, it is a masterwork of modernism, and a national historic landmark. "The important features were inside," Boucher says. "These column details resembled mushrooms. In one room was a wall made of Lucite pipes, which became the cover of my book* A Record in Detail*." The pipes introduce soft light into the space.*

He stresses the importance of light, and luck. Sometimes pictures took hours of waiting for the right moment, coupled with years of technical savvy. Other times, he says, they happened "by accident."



NEAR RIGHT: *Fort Pulaski, a Civil War fortress and national monument in Georgia. "I love photographing forts," Boucher says."First of all, I love medieval architecture. There are so many photo opportunities in a fortress because of the long passageways much like cloisters, and of course features like underground tunnels and casemates."* **FAR RIGHT:** *Boucher shot Utah's 19th century Silver King Mining Company for the Historic American Engineering Record. Debris on the rails signals the structure's long defunct status. "It was quite interesting because of all the wood used to move equipment and grain," he says, with steel and machinery apparently at a premium in the desert.*

You can't escape the sensation that something is going on that does not lend itself to language. The pictures are alive with the intangible thing that is history.

TODAY, HIS IMAGES ARE CONSPICUOUS AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF A RISING interest in photography. The 35mm camera "put the latest in photographic technology into the hands of the eager amateur," says William H. Pierson in *A Record in Detail,* a retrospective of Jack's work. As a result, Pierson says, there are very few buildings "that have not been shot, from every angle . . . with every conceivable kind of lens, under every condition of light, and all with such predictable quality as to make the results indistinguishable one from the other." In the midst of this frenzy, "Jack Boucher's photographs stand out with stunning serenity. They are serene because they are contemplative." HABS' scope then, as now, was broad. Writes staff historian Virginia Price in the upcoming history of the survey, "Its subjects were multicultural, urban and rural, secular and profane, vernacular and high style."

By the mid-'60s, federal preservation was expanding. In 1966, HABS headquarters moved from Philadelphia to Washington, DC. Boucher, who lived in Atlantic City, faced a tough decision. "I was freshly married, and neither of us wanted to move to Washington," he says. Because of his involvement in local preservation, he was offered a position as director of New Jersey's Office of Historic Sites. "I decided to accept the job, which had great promise," he says. "I had charge of 18 historic houses, three historic villages, and about four lighthouses. It was very interesting, but they had no money. For the 18 historic houses I had a grand total of $35,000. You could have lost $35,000 in any one of them." The politics added to his frustration and within four years, he had enough. He got a call from the National Park Service, then embarking on an effort to document a class of sites that, though vital to the American story, had received little attention. The new Historic American Engineering Record would document railroads, factories, mills, bridges, roads, and more. Boucher was offered his old job back—along with the chance to shoot this type of site, too. He moved to Washington.

The region has a rich architectural legacy, which Boucher captured in the stunning *Landmarks of Prince George's County* . . . The result of the project was a time exposure of the once-sleepy southern tidewater, a landscape formerly populated by plantation mansions, tobacco fields, small towns, and dwellings of every stripe.

LEFT: *St. Paul's Church, part of a regional survey in which Boucher and HABS recorded 64 structures in Prince George's County, Maryland. "The elements of the design—the circular window, the arched window and doorway—are all harmonious in their use of the curve," he says. Places that are rural and poor, he points out, tend to retain a great deal of their architectural integrity, as was the case in parts of the county. The survey was done at the request of local officials, who were keen to capture the county's rapidly disappearing architectural heritage. The agricultural ways of the county—a suburb of Washington, DC—have largely disappeared, subsumed by sprawl.*
RIGHT: *Addison Chapel, part of the same survey. "This is a perfect case of putting a place in context. Any time I documented a structure, that would be my very first view. Here you have a church, and a graveyard." In its context, the church appears incidental to the tombs.*

BOUCHER ONCE AGAIN PACKED HIS GEAR AND WENT IN WHATEVER DIRECTION the project called for. By this time, HABS was well known as the gold standard in architectural documentation, a distinction owed somewhat to Boucher himself. William Lebovich, in *A Record in Detail*, writes that Jack possessed a "unique vision and ability to create photographs that are informative, in a documentary sense, and have the movement or tension [of] fine art photography." His bosses depended on his eye. "When you go out on these projects, you're on your own," Boucher says. "There is not a list that says 'get a view of southwest room, second floor from northeast,' or anything like that. You have to know architecture—and what's important to preserve."

Federal, state, and local agencies increasingly relied on the expertise of HABS, whose regional surveys delivered broad, rich portraits of peoples, events, and cultural realities of the past. "When you compare the building forms in a region, you see patterns," says program chief Catherine Lavoie. "This helps develop the historical and architectural context." A good example is HABS' work in Prince George's County, Maryland, in the late 1980s. The region has a rich architectural legacy, which Boucher captured in the stunning *Landmarks of Prince George's County*. The project, done at the county's request, captured "a broad

range of properties," says Lavoie. "Large parts of the region were still rural." Lavoie did the research, often speaking with property owners to document the story that helped direct Boucher's lens. "I would see something that indicated a change, like an addition that had historic significance," she says. The result of the project was a time exposure of the once-sleepy southern tidewater, a landscape formerly populated by plantation mansions, tobacco fields, small towns, and dwellings of every stripe, transformed by its proximity to Washington, DC. The county government used the end product—the in-depth research as well as the high-quality images—as the basis for education and outreach, mounting an exhibit at the Arts Club of Washington.

From ladders, cherry pickers, even helicopters, Boucher

captured the classical, the threatened, the *au courant,* the quirky, and the forgotten.

THE PRESERVATION MOVEMENT GREW MORE SOPHISTICATED IN THE '70S AND '8os as many localities passed preservation ordinances, working in concert with the structure put in place by the National Historic Preservation Act, which created the National Register of Historic Places and the federal, state, tribal, and local partnerships we know today. HAER became so well established that it needed its own photographer. Jack continued with HABS.

From ladders, cherry pickers, even helicopters, Boucher captured the classical, the threatened, the *au courant,* the quirky, and the forgotten. Books and exhibits featured his photographs.

He stresses the importance of light, and luck. Sometimes pictures took hours of waiting for the right moment, coupled with years of technical savvy. Other times, he says, they happened "by accident."

Boucher seems less interested in technique than talking about a lifetime on the road. A U.S. Navy sub cut his catamaran in half when he was off the Puerto Rico coast shooting a 16th century fort. Lost on a remote road on his way to New Mexico's El Morro National Monument, he was greated by a rifle-toting man when knocking on a door to ask for directions. Later that night, awoken inside his tent, he thought the armed stranger was outside, but instead it was the biggest skunk he had ever seen. A helicopter lost power while he was shooting Jamestown from the air, dropping 200 feet before the engine started again.

LEFT: *Photographing the remains of Puerto Rico's Hacienda Azucarera la Concepcion sugar mill was, in Boucher's words, "intensely interesting." Aside from having to carry cumbersome equipment in the tropical heat, the site was remote. "You could not drive within a quarter mile of it," says Boucher, who had to lug his gear the rest of the way by foot. "That meant five or six round trips," he says. "In this picture is a 'Jamaica Train,'" he adds, where sugar cane juice was ladled from one pot to the next in a difficult, labor-intensive process. Of the pots, Boucher says, "They were enormous. God only knows how much they weighed. You really were documenting something that was integral to the life and times of the area."* **ABOVE:** *The spiral staircase at Las Cabezas de San Juan lighthouse, also on the island, part of a nature preserve and listed in the National Register of Historic Places.*

BUT BOUCHER'S AFFINITY FOR STORY REVEALS SOMETHING ABOUT HIS PHOTOGRAPHS. It is clear that he is intrigued by detail, hue, and nuance. An assignment to photograph Edison Laboratories is not, in his telling, simply taking pictures of the famous inventor's workplace. It is, in part, the story of his conversation with a man in the company cafeteria, discovering that he is Edison's son. As Lebovich writes, "Fidelity to the subject is essential, of course, but it is a point of departure, not the entire objective." Boucher understood the functional parameters of the job. But he also had a gift for turning a two dimensional image into a story, adding what Lebovich calls "the powerfully dynamic realities of architectural space, tactile substance, and stylistic vocabulary." You see the dormer, the dentilation, the roofline. You sense the era, the mood, the human presence.

When one looks at Boucher's photographs, one is looking at the growth of HABS and, by extension, the evolution of the preservation movement. On the heels of the NHPA came the National Environmental Protection Act, which included the historic fabric of place in its definition of "environment." Policy and regulations were refined as federal, state, and local governments professionalized their staffs and became more invested in preservation. The NHPA was amended to empower certified local governments in 1980, and then Native American tribes in 1992.

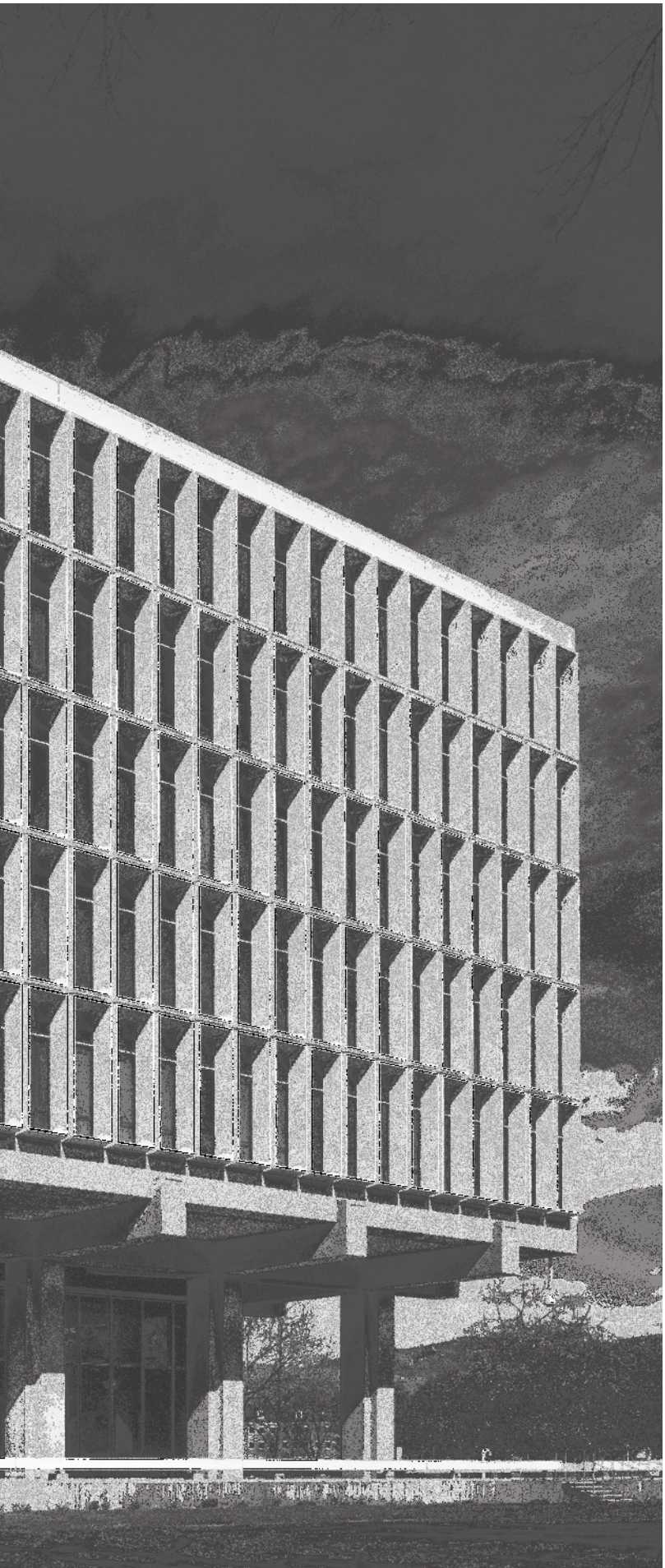
In the late '90s, Boucher took part in a survey of Quaker meeting houses in the Delaware Valley, a federally funded documentation of this endangered and little-known legacy. "Jack photographed around 25 of the them," Lavoie says, "basically 300 years of meeting-house evolution." The project produced a book, *Silent Witness: Quaker Meeting Houses in the Delaware Valley, 1695 to Present*, a symposium, and an exhibit at the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. The images are contemplative and stark. They also serve as the perfect evidence of Quaker craft, the marriage of beauty and structure. In Boucher's lens, the two exist in equal parts.

Writes Pierson, "As in all great artistic performances, technique is the handmaiden of statement; in the end, it is the building as a work of art that Jack Boucher sees, understands, and celebrates." Looking through the collection at the Library of Congress, one gets a powerful sense of Jack's legacy to the nation. In Boucher's pictures of America he has given us both an evidentiary document and a dream of the past.

The HABS/HAER collection at the Library of Congress, on the web at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer, is an unequalled archive of American history. While preservation professionals and historians find it invaluable for research, others discover in it a passage to the past. "Many people have a fondness for anything American," writes Lebovich in *A Record in Detail*, "and find the collection a fascinating way to see this country." The collection, which covers the entire nation, is in many cases the only record of buildings that have been destroyed.

Looking through the collection at the Library of Congress, one gets a powerful sense of Jack's legacy to the nation. In Boucher's pictures of America he has given us both an evidentiary document and a dream of the past.

LEFT: *Bradford Meetinghouse in Chester County, Pennsylvania, built in 1767, one of many Quaker meeting houses recorded by HABS as part of a regional survey in the Delaware Valley. "The meeting houses were extraordinary," says Boucher. "The purpose of our survey was to show the development of the Quaker meeting house from the earliest to the present day." Many of them are still in use—retaining much of their architectural integrity—with wood stoves still providing heat. While the photo seems at a glance to be a mirror image, it is in fact two separate rooms, one for men and one for women. Panels in the wall can be closed to seal the two off.* **ABOVE:** *The Reel Farm at Antietam Battlefield.*



PHYLLIS KING

the future of modern

federal architecture in an era of change

by meghan hogan

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT THE RENOVATION OF A courthouse entry pavilion—one of thousands across the nation—could cause so much trouble? In the midst of a project to expand security screening at Denver's Byron G. Rogers Federal Building and Courthouse, the U.S. General Service Administration, the structure's owner, got a surprise. Local preservationists didn't want the Neo-Formalist façade altered. Considered one of the city's best examples of mid-century modernism, they wanted it preserved just the way it was, warts and all. So GSA took a second look at the 5-story courthouse—and the 18-story office building linked to it—eventually coming up with a design to save some of the character-defining features. But the agency sensed itself facing a bigger problem. The complex was only one of over 550 modernist-era federal properties fast approaching the 50-year mark, when buildings can be officially considered "historic"—and if noteworthy listed in the National Register of Historic Places or designated as national historic landmarks. "The implications were significant," says Rolando Rivas-Camp, director of GSA's Center for Historic Buildings. What was noteworthy, and what was not? With some of the structures already in dire need, how to balance maintenance and historic integrity? What does the future hold for these buildings, so synonymous with the era of America's rise to global leadership?

LEFT: ***The James A. McClure Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Boise, Idaho. Built on pilotis, a modernist trademark, the white concrete structure appears to float.***

Modernism was a salute to the postwar era

such as Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen, and Philip Johnson. At the height of its popularity, the sweeping

THESE WERE JUST SOME OF THE QUESTIONS THAT GSA—OFTEN CALLED THE nation's largest landlord, with jurisdiction over 330 million square feet of federal office space—had to confront. While answers have not been easy, that has not stopped the quest, which last year earned an award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Trust praised GSA for its "strong foundation for the sensitive stewardship of federally owned buildings." The honor was notable, with the agency one of only 20 awardees chosen from a field of almost 200. "The award was an easy one," says Valecia Crisafulli, director of the Trust's Center for Preservation Leadership, lauding the longevity of the 10-year initiative, which commenced by convening 75 of the nation's top architects and preservationists at "Architecture of the Great Society: Assessing the GSA Portfolio of Buildings Constructed During the 1960s and 1970s," a forum held in 2000. "We knew we had 100 million square feet of office space needing to be updated," says attendee Ed Feiner, GSA's former chief architect.

The group wasted no time, producing recommendations in just two months. Grouped into four categories, they called for an inventory of the buildings, criteria to evaluate architectural excellence, policy to guide preservation, and public outreach.

Growth, Efficiency, and Modernism: GSA Buildings of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, a handsome volume published as part of the outreach effort, detailed the challenges—and potential solutions—painting a portrait of America ascendant at mid-century. In many ways, it is the story of modernism itself.

IN ITS DAY, THE STYLE WAS APPLAUDED AS THE FACE OF THE FUTURE BY SOME and reviled for destroying human-friendly streetscapes by others. Yet few would argue its place in history. Indeed, the style is enjoying a resurgence, with some of today's cutting-edge federal buildings picking up where their predecessors left off.

Modernism was a salute to the postwar era itself, spearheaded by architectural giants such as Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen, and Philip Johnson. At the height of its popularity, the sweeping curves, sheets of glass, and absence of ornament signaled change. "Architects hoped that the machine age would bring about equality and democratic values for all citizens," says *Growth, Efficiency, and Modernism*. The sentiment was echoed by President John F. Kennedy, writing in an issue of the *AIA Journal*: "The art and design of changing cities aims not only at providing better homes and community facilities, more efficient transportation and desirable open spaces, but also a setting in which men and women can fully live up to their responsibilities as free citizens."

Kennedy took note of the sorry state of federal architecture on his very first day in office—January 20, 1961—as he rode down Pennsylvania Avenue during the inaugural parade. He called the blighted and vacant stretch a "disgrace to the nation," and soon formed the Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space to evaluate the issue. The group's "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture" set a new vision for GSA. Written by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the principles said that buildings should convey the "dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the American government." To that end, they should incorporate the highest architectural thought, avoid official style, and make quality site choice and development the first priority. Public art should enliven the streetscape, said the principles (later called the "standards"), which led to a wealth of sculptural delights from Alexander Calder's painted steel *Flamingo* in Chicago's Federal Center Plaza to Robert Maki's *Trapezoid E* in front of Eugene, Oregon's Federal Courthouse.

RIGHT: *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's steel-and-glass Chicago Federal Center, a three-building site including the U.S. Post Office Loop Station, the Everett M. Dirksen U.S. Courthouse, and the 42-story John C. Kluczynski Federal Building.* **ABOVE:** *Alexander Calder's whimsical* Flamingo, *in the center's plaza, a 50-ton painted steel sculpture that is part of GSA's Art in Architecture program.*

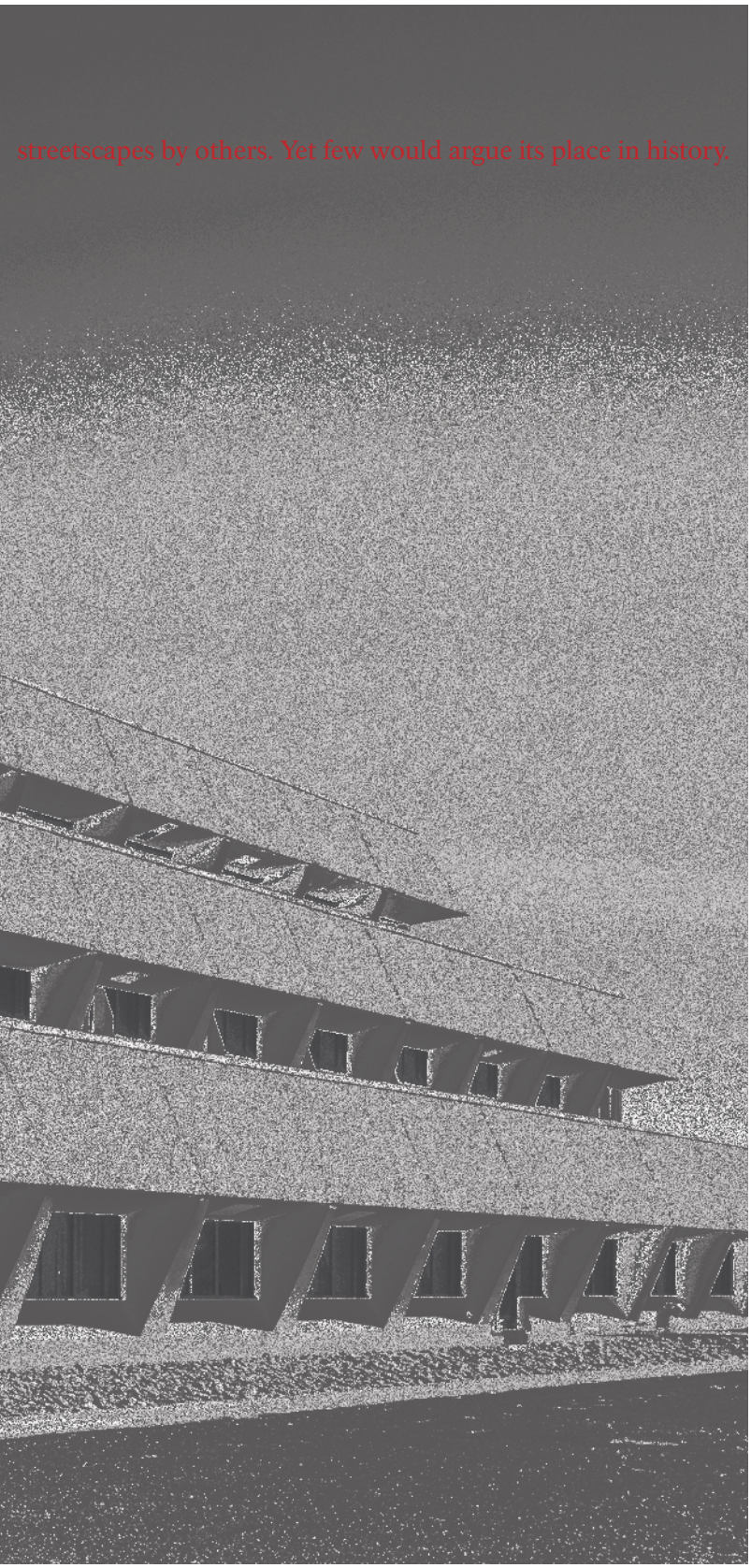
itself, spearheaded by architectural giants

curves, sheets of glass, and absence of ornament signaled change.

LEFT GSA, RIGHT HEDRICH BLESSING

In its day, the style was applauded as the face of the future by some and reviled for destroying human-friendly

CAROL M. HIGHSMITH PHOTOGRAPHY INC./GSA



streetscapes by others. Yet few would argue its place in history.

THE "GUIDING PRINCIPLES" KICK-STARTED A FEDERAL CONSTRUCTION BOOM, with major projects built in several cities simultaneously—a first for GSA, a young agency that had only been around since 1949. The last boom was in the 1930s, with around 1,300 structures constructed as part of the New Deal. That effort, under the auspices of the Supervising Architect's Office, a Treasury Department division, largely relied on staff architects. Under the tenure of GSA Administrator Lawson B. Knott, Jr., almost 300 buildings sprang up from 1965 to 1969, with the square footage reaching a record 200 million. Designed not by staffers but by private architects under commission, some were indeed gems.

Boston's John F. Kennedy Federal Building, designed by Walter Gropius, is one of the agency's finest modernist monuments, with its sleek 26-story concrete and granite twin towers connected to a lower 4-story concrete and glass structure. Another is the Robert E. Weaver Federal Building in Washington, DC, built for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development—and one of Marcel Breuer's signature accomplishments. The three-building Chicago Federal Center, constructed for GSA between 1960 and 1974, is also a masterwork, with architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's "less is more" philosophy apparent in the simplicity of the well-structured steel and glass ensemble.

Despite such jewels, not all of Kennedy's dreams for federal architecture were realized. That is partly because, as *Growth, Efficiency, and Modernism* points out, the guiding principles were open to interpretation and "some interpretations were more successful than others." The book provides an unflinching account of the blunders. Often structures were little more than worker warehouses, not environments built to boost morale and productivity. "GSA mid-century architecture when it was done well, was done very well, and when it was done badly, it was done very badly," Feiner says.

One oft-critiqued edifice is Washington, DC's J. Edgar Hoover Building, headquarters of the FBI. Designed in the Brutalist fashion by architect C.F. Murphy, it features a massive concrete overhang, today surrounded by various concrete bollards and planters, which some consider oppressive to the streetscape and a sad image of open government. Others say its well-sculpted mass would have worked better by itself, perhaps in a pastoral setting. The criticism highlights a problem with many modernist offerings—their inability to fit in. As *Growth, Efficiency, and Modernism* acknowledges, many structures were built in a style "that is massive, severe, and disengaged from its environment."

As the 1960s moved into the 1970s, GSA did institute improvements, including the passing of the Public Buildings Cooperative Use Act in 1976, which allowed for retail space in federal buildings. But it was a dismal period for design, as standards deteriorated under the pressure to cut costs. Inflation, the Vietnam War, and other factors overwhelmed the economy; building budgets were scrutinized and spending slashed. "It was like a cost accountant had run wild," says Joe Valerio, a peer reviewer for current GSA projects and principal at the Chicago-based Valerio Dewalt Train Associates architecture firm. "The attitude was to get buildings up quickly for the lowest possible price."

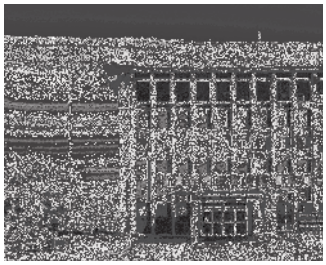
LEFT: *The Chet Holifield Federal Building in Laguna Niguel, California, a ziggurat-style edifice designed by William L. Pereira in 1971, is GSA's third largest property.*

Federal Modern Then

International Style

Absence of ornament
Box-shaped
Expansive windows
Smooth walls
Cantilevers

Formalism

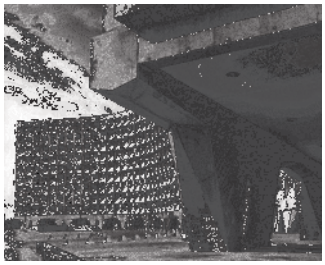


Flat projecting rooflines
High-quality materials
Columnar supports
Smooth walls
Strict symmetry

Brutalism

Massive appearance
Rough, exposed concrete
Broad, expansive walls
Deep recessed windows

Expressionism



Sweeping, curved rooflines and walls
Nonexistent or minimal use of symmetrical or geometric forms
Faceted, concave, or convex surfaces
Arched or vaulting spaces

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: *Evidencing a range of style: the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, Boise, Idaho; the David J. Wheeler Federal Building and U.S. Post Office, Baker City, Oregon; the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, Rome, Georgia; the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Building, Washington, DC.*

TODAY, THE SHODDY CONSTRUCTION AND EXPERIMENTAL MATERIALS OF THIS recent past translate into maintenance costs in excess of what it takes to preserve GSA's older properties. "Unlike traditional historic buildings, these weren't constructed to last for centuries," Rivas-Camp says. "The philosophy of the modern movement, coupled with the rapid pace of changing technology, resulted in buildings with a typical lifespan of only 20 to 30 years."

In 1977, the shortcomings of the "principles" led to a hearing before the Senate Subcommittee on Buildings and Grounds. Opinions differed on the problem, but the consensus was that GSA had taken a wrong turn somewhere. Then-AIA President John McGinty opined, "It was not necessarily the role of the federal government to be on the leading edge of technological innovations in architecture." Roy Knight, then Acting Director of the Architecture and Environmental Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, thought many designs were "sterile in appearance and unfriendly in image." *Washington Post* architecture critic Wolf Von Eckhardt said that the American people should get a chance to weigh in, since "federal buildings were built for public use." Yet all agreed that good design should not be sacrificed because of cost. "These buildings will be used for a long time," said Nicholas Panuzio, then Commissioner of GSA's Public Buildings Service.

So what to do with this legacy today? Foremost is tapping the best buildings as preservation candidates. Determining where a structure lands on the scale of architectural excellence involves a lot of questions, says Rivas-Camp. So GSA developed a sophisticated assessment tool—a checklist to help determine eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. It's already helped Breuer's HUD Building and Victor Lundy's United States Tax Court Building get listed, with nominations for three more structures in the works—the Chicago Federal Center, Columbia, South Carolina's Strom Thurmond Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse, and Boston's John F. Kennedy Federal Building.

Most modernist properties won't rate as high as these, simply because they are unremarkable. However, the assessment tool is also evaluating them for ease of updating to meet today's energy standards. That's a plus given President Obama's economic stimulus package, with $5.5 billion going to GSA's Federal Buildings Fund for retrofits and green construction to meet his promise to modernize 75 percent of federal buildings. "Some of the greatest opportunities for green building are in our existing building stock," says Jason Hartke, director of advocacy and public policy at the U.S. Green Building Council, the developers of LEED, used to certify environmental friendliness. "It's a multi-year process that will create jobs, save energy, and save billions of dollars," he says. Making modernist buildings green won't happen overnight, but the stimulus is "a tremendous down payment towards achieving that effort." The process has its challenges, says Rivas-Camp. "Buildings are not static, they need to develop and change to stay relevant and functional." At the same time, GSA doesn't want to lose an historic structure's character. Most important to that, he says, is staying true to the architect's design intent.

RIGHT: *The experimental George H.W. Bush Federal Building pushes the architectural envelope while making a nod to its mid-century modern predecessors.*

OPPOSITE LEFT TO RIGHT GSA; J. KEVIN HASS; CAROL M. HIGHSMITH PHOTOGRAPHY INC./GSA; BEN SCHNALL/COURTESY OF THE MARCEL BREUER PAPERS, 1920-1986, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

BELOW ©TIM GRIFFITH/ESTO

Federal Modern Now

The Thom Mayne-designed George H.W. Bush Federal Building in San Francisco—with its allusions to Marcel Breuer's mid-century icon, the Whitney Museum—is one of the world's most environmentally friendly structures. Employees enjoy an environment with a sky garden, expansive lobbies, and natural light through 85 percent of the space, much of it cooled by a sophisticated outside ventilation system—no air conditioning.


Boston’s John F. Kennedy Federal

Building, designed by Walter Gropius, is one of the agency's finest modernist monuments, with its sleek 26-story concrete and granite twin towers connected to a lower 4-story concrete and glass structure.

Federal Modern Now

The U.S. Food & Drug Administration regional headquarters in Irvine, California—by architecture firm Zimmer Gunsul Frasca—was designed partly around the idea of open space. Glass walls, which partition offices from labs, allow a clear view through the building. The exterior, clad in concrete, wood, and an abundance of glass, brings the outside in, affording employees a scenic view of the coastal wetlands adjacent to the building, part of the San Joaquin Freshwater Marsh Reserve. The structure pays tribute to the masterworks of California modernists like Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra, which likewise embrace nature. "The visual and spatial permeability of the curved glass façade and the corridor behind it reflect significant changes in the FDA's institutional image," notes Raul A. Barreneche in his book *FDA at Irvine: Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Partnership.* "ZGF's design suggests not a secretive, opaque bureaucracy, but a transparent, future-minded and open—within limits—institution."

TODAY'S FEDERAL BUILDINGS ARE BEING DESIGNED TO LAST A LIFETIME, SAYS GSA, with the most forward of the group clearly alluding to their mid-century counterparts. The allusions are more than visual. These structures are direct descendants of that era's legacy.

In 1990, GSA instituted a design awards program to acknowledge superior government architecture. Yet juries kept giving awards to structures built in the 1930s. When it came to the 1980s era, juries thought the buildings "should eventually 'disappear,'" says Feiner. "That was part of the stimulus to change our ways."

So GSA created a program called Design Excellence. Its goal was to change the face of government, encouraging a new generation of architects to build on, and surpass, what came before, avoiding the earlier pitfalls.

The program works through several stages. First, firms submit portfolios for advertised projects. Then a five-member panel, including a private sector architect listed in GSA's National Register of Peer Professionals, evaluates the submissions. The panel shortlists qualified firms, deciding who will be asked to submit proposals and do interviews. The key to success is that the process uses a team of top-flight professionals, including architects, urban planners, and engineers, to review portfolios and designs. "You're there to remind everyone to look at the bigger picture, when they might be looking at the trees instead of the forest," says Valerio, one of the program's 700 reviewers. As a result, today's federal building commissions draw the architectural cream of the crop.

Creativity has flourished under the program, says GSA. Take the new U.S. Food & Drug Administration regional headquarters in Irvine, California (see sidebar, opposite). Both laboratory and administrative office, the sprawling compound weds science and design. Architecture firm Zimmer Gunsul Frasca designed the 133,000-square-foot complex partly around the idea of open space. Three two-story lab wings feature interchangeable modules allowing scientists, who test a quarter of the country's imported food here, easy access to the different types of space they need. Another recent head-turner is San Francisco's George H.W. Bush Federal Building, conceived by cutting-edge architect Thom Mayne and his firm, Morphosis (see sidebar, page 33), though reactions were mixed at the 18-story structure's 2007 opening. The glimmering fin

FAR LEFT: *The Walter Gropius-designed John F. Kennedy Federal Building, constructed between 1963 and 1966, in Boston, Massachusetts.* **NEAR LEFT:** *A U.S. Food & Drug Administration employee works quietly in one of the sun-lit meeting nodes gathered at stairways throughout the new California regional headquarters, where workers enjoy views of both the marshy wetlands adjacent to the 10-acre site and the internal corridor that stretches the length of the entire complex.*




Federal Modern Now

The 2007 Skidmore, Owings and Merrill Census Bureau complex, with its partial shielding of white oak brise soleil, looks more suited to a forest than to the urban outskirts of Washington, DC. The inside is anything but rustic, however. Employees are greeted by a stunning Jason Salovan-designed artwork blending multitudes of census data into a kaleidoscope of color, before entering a 1,100-foot-long corridor, aka "the Street." The hallway seems to wind on indefinitely, but a color theme breaks it into sections: red, blue, green, orange, yellow, and purple. "The vibrant color spectrum, progressing from violet at one end to red at the other, enlivens the space and establishes a clear sense of spatial hierarchy, which helps with wayfinding," says Stephen Apking, an SOM interior design partner who worked to make the place employee-friendly.

of a building certainly stands in high contrast to the Beaux Arts-style federal courthouse across the street. To the architecture community, it represents the tradition of postwar modernism at its best, a bold message that GSA isn't afraid to build buildings that shout out to passers-by. And people are definitely looking. "You can debate some of the issues about whether it relates, but what it really does is establish a presence that is forward-thinking," Feiner says. *New York Times* architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff said that the building "may one day be remembered as the crowning achievement of the General Service Administration's Design Excellence program." And not only do Design Excellence buildings stretch creativity, proponents say, their environments make employees happier and more productive. Workers indeed seem happy at the new $331 million Skidmore, Owings and Merrill-designed Census Bureau Headquarters in Suitland, Maryland (see sidebar, right). For its opening, the Census Bureau Chorale came up with a song, "Some Enchanted Building"—a variation on the pop hit "Some Enchanted Evening"—to express their appreciation. "This work, under Design Excellence, has been honored by virtually every professional critic in the United States and has even been noticed by writers in Europe and Asia," writes Valerio in a *Chicago Life* article about the program.

Its effect stretches beyond GSA. New York mayor Michael Bloomberg implemented his city's Design + Construction Excellence Initiative to improve public works, and the U.S. State Department is considering a similar program in hopes of improving the unfriendly bunker-like quality of some of its embassies.

GSA is constructing a legacy for the years to come built on the legacy of years past. "Some of these buildings are the examples of this period," Feiner says. "They are the Mies van der Rohes, Saarinens, and Gropiuses of the future."

For further information about GSA's modernist buildings or to download a copy of *Growth, Efficiency, and Modernism*, go to www.gsa.gov/federalmodernism. A pdf of GSA's follow-up publication, *Extending the Legacy*, is also on the site. The U.S. Green Building Council's website, www.usgbc.org, has a wealth of information on green building and LEED.

"Some of the greatest opportunities for green building are in our

says Jason Hartke, director of advocacy and public policy at the U.S. Green Building Council, the developers of LEED, used to

The bustle along "the Street" makes it feel like a small city, not just a come-and-go office building. An array of amenities—gym, convenience store, bank, day care, cafeteria—are all on site. There's also a state-of-the-art broadcasting and film editing studio. The Street's color code extends up eight floors, where 6,000 federal workers busily prepare for the 2010 census at workstations illuminated in natural light. Activity nodes—"wood boxes popping in and out of the main structure," says Apking—offer each division a quiet space for informal meetings or impromptu breaks. Green features such as underfloor air distribution and recycled materials helped earn the complex a silver LEED rating. The view from the roof peers out over the agency's old home, a phalanx of deteriorated 1940s-era office buildings—now being demolished—their cold exteriors a stark contrast to the wood-sheathed complex rising above them, a paean to SOM masterworks of mid-century.

FAR LEFT: *The "auditorium pod" protrudes from the white oak exterior of the new SOM-designed Census Bureau complex.* **MIDDLE LEFT:** *Two shots inside the "activity nodes"—quiet seating areas for informal meetings or breaks.* **NEAR LEFT:** *A glance down the color-coded, 1,100-foot-long hallway, lined with decorative panels.* **BELOW:** *The Robert C. Weaver Federal Building, named after the country's first African American cabinet member, was constructed for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, DC. Built between 1963 and 1968, it is considered by historians to be one of modernism's most notable accomplishments.*

FAR LEFT SOM, OTHERS ON THE LEFT EDUARD HUEBER/ARCHPHOTO.COM; BELOW BEN SCHNALL/COURTESY OF THE MARCEL BREUER PAPERS, 1920-1986, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

existing building stock,"

certify environmentaly friendliness.

ARTIFACT SHACK OF THE NEW

"WE ABUSE LAND BECAUSE we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong we may begin to use it with love and respect." These words capture the essence of Aldo Leopold. The ecologist, forester, and author, who achieved international stature as the pioneer of a new conservation movement, got much of his inspiration—both practical and intellectual—in a little shack on the Wisconsin River. **THAT SHACK WAS JUST DESIGNATED** a national historic landmark, along with the surrounding 264-acre farm, in Baraboo, Wisconsin, for its association with the evolution of land management and our stewardship of the natural world. Leopold's ethic, expressed famously in his 1949 book *Sand County Almanac,* changed the way people thought about forest and range management, soil and water use, private land policy, biodiversity, and sustainable agriculture. His name is often mentioned in the company of Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Gifford Pinchot. **THE SHACK WAS JUST AN OLD CHICKEN COOP** when Leopold arrived in 1935, having bought the property as a weekend family retreat after joining the faculty at the University of Wisconsin. The land was sandy and denuded after decades of aggressive 19th century farming and grazing, devastated by overuse and drought, driving wildlife away. The shack and its environs became a lab for Leopold's ideas. **THE ALMANAC, SET ON THE LITTLE FARM BY THE RIVER,** documented his observations as he and his family restored the ruined ecosystem. Today, the site is maintained by the Aldo Leopold Foundation, which advocates responsible land use through education and research. **TO SEE THE NHL NOMINATION,** go to www.nps.gov/history/nhl/designations/samples/wi/AldoLeopold.pdf. The Leopold Foundation is at www.aldoleopold.org/.

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